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KOPPEL: Good evening. I'm Ted Koppel, and this is Nightline. This film of Andrei Sakharov is almost certainly a production of the KGB, which may be one of the world's most-feared secret police organizations. But when it comes to making movies, subtlety is obviously not its strong point. (Sakharov film)

UNIDENTIFIED ANNOUNCER: What could be more pleasant than a nice chat?

KOPPEL: What, then, is the purpose of the film? We'll examine that question with Ladislav Bittman, a former Czech intelligence officer whose job was creating disinformation, with Soviet expert William Hyland and with Tatiana Yankelevich, Dr. Sakharov's stepdaughter. On May 2 of this year, Andrei Sakharov began a protest hunger strike because the Soviets refused to allow his wife to leave the country for needed medical treatment. Almost nothing has been seen or heard of the Sakharovs since, except for couple of black-and-white photographs that were sold to a German newspaper a number of weeks back. Recently, that same newspaper, Bild, acquired some film which ABC News in turn purchased from them. We're going to look at a big chunk of that film now. The narrative, which we've had translated, is largely self-explanatory, but watch for these points: hunger strike--Sakharov is seen eating; his poor health and hers--she is seen smoking, shopping, driving, he reading, chatting and walking; to date scenes, magazines that are clumsily inserted wherever possible, and to diminish the impact of exile--the Sakharovs cannot leave Gorky--the viewer is treated at the beginning of this film to a fulsome travelogue. Take a look.

VOICE OF TRANSLATOR: Since January 1980, academician Andrei Sakharov and his wife, Yelena Bonner, have been living in Gorky by the decision of the authorities. At 214 \*Gargaren Prospect, they occupy a four-room apartment on the ground floor. Sakharov was assigned the post of senior research worker, and their family budget, including his life-long academician salary, is now 800 rubles a month. They rent a car which they take turns to drive. When they first moved in, the academician took an active part in making the apartment comfortable and in improving the apartment lot courtyard outside. On the whole, the couple spend most of their time together, just the two of them. They go out for walks in the town and for drives, and although they keep to themselves, they are glad to welcome visitors at their home, both relatives or simply friends. Academician Sakharov's son, Dimitri, came on a visit from Moscow to stay with his father. And here's his daughter, Tatiana, and his granddaughter, \*Marana, taking a walk in the park and through the town. Sakharov himself never leaves Gorky, but until recently, Bonner had this right and made regular visits to Moscow. According to reports in the Soviet press, Bonner established contacts with the U.S. Embassy and planned to take refuge there so as to blackmail the authorities into granting her request by putting pressure on them. She would have been in much the same position as were recently the group of Pentecostals who had lived in the embassy for over five years. To prevent Bonner from taking such actions in the future, she has now been temporarily banned by the authorities from leaving Gorky and at present she goes to local prosecutor's office to give explanations. In her everyday life, Yelena Bonner looks a little more dynamic than her husband. It's usually she who fills up the car and she who drives a lot about the town, meeting acquaintances and friends. Like all wives, Bonner has taken the burden of house sitting upon herself. Her husband,

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though not a vegetarian, prefers a vegetable diet. To be able to provide this diet, Bonner has no choice but to buy fresh supplies for him at the city market. She is also very frequently seen at the cemetery. A distant relative of hers, \*Yuri Hanafsky, was buried here. And here, some of the latest shots of Bonner in Gorky. As for Sakharov himself, he is, at present, resting. He meets with friends and keeps up with events by watching television and reading the papers, including foreign publications. Sakharov usually eats dinner alone. His appetite is good. He sleeps very soundly and because of this, he is now 2\_ kilos over his usual weight. This worries him a little and he watches his health closely, like a scientist. (Scene from film, Sakharov receiving magazine from attendant.) SAKHAROV: Oh, thank you very much. So (unintelligible) is supplying me with magazines? Does he read them himself? WOMAN: I suppose so. SAKHAROV: Well, thank you. WOMAN: All the best. I leave it here for you. SAKHAROV: Thank you for Newsweek. NARRATOR: And again, a breath of fresh air. What could be more pleasant than a nice chat?

KOPPEL: When we return, we'll talk live with Dr. Sakharov's stepdaughter, with a former Czech intelligence officer and with Soviet specialist William Hyland, as we examine the Sakharov film and what it truly tells us.

KOPPEL: Joining us now live from our Boston bureau is Andrei Sakharov's stepdaughter, Tatiana\Yankelevich, and Ladimir\Bittman, a former deputy chief of the disinformation department of the Czechoslovak intelligence service. He now works and lives here in the United States. In our New York studios, William\Hyland, Soviet expert, editor of Foreign Affairs magazine and former deputy director of the National Security Council. Ms. Yankelevich, let me begin with you. Are you the Tatiana that was referred in the beginning of that film? TATIANA\YANKELEVICH (Sakharov's stepdaughter): No, I was not. In fact, Dr. Sakharov has his daughter that's younger from the first marriage, and she's the one who has visited him in Gorky with her daughter.

KOPPEL: Do you have any sense of the timing, because clearly the films that we see there were shot at totally different times. Some seem to have been shot many months ago; others clearly were shot quite recently. YANKELEVICH: Well, you're absolutely right, Ted. The impression that we are, that the Soviet government apparently is trying to produce upon us is that everything is normal now and that this is how their life goes on in Gorky, while the shot that is being made of Dr. Sakharov with his daughter and granddaughter has been made about a year ago when they visited him last summer, and the other one, the one with the son, was made sometime last winter.

KOPPEL: What about some of the obvious... I ask you this since you are a family member. You look at him, you look at Yelena Bonner, how do they look to you? YANKELEVICH: Well, the most recent photographs that we, the family, had directly from our parents, I do not mean the photographs that were received from Mr. Louis by the German newspaper, were of March this year. And comparing to those photographs, both my mother and my father have aged significantly, especially Dr. Sakharov, especially my father. I must say that I was, the first time when I looked at the still photographs that you showed last night on your program, I was distressed by the way he looks. He looks as a very old person, very old man, and he hasn't looked like this. At least some five months ago he was a completely different person.

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KOPPEL: But he does not look.... We're looking at some of the film right now, and we can hear the narrator. If we could get rid of the narrator for a moment, that would be helpful. He clearly is not a man who is on a hunger strike, which is a point that the Soviets make in none too subtle a fashion. YANKELEVICH: Yes, they have not a subtle fashion. They are trying to make every effort to prove to us that he is not any longer on a hunger strike, which apparently is true, judging by the way, by that shot when he eats. And they're also trying to convince us that these shots were made, this filming was made very recently, and that is apparently true as well, judging on the covers of the Newsweek magazines.

KOPPEL: You made reference a moment ago to a Mr. Louis. You're obviously referring to Victor \*Louis, who I think, is he a Swiss national? YANKELEVICH: No, he's a Soviet national, and he is employed by a British newspaper, the title of which I'm never sure. It's either Evening Mail or Evening Standard, or could be both.

KOPPEL: Let me turn to Ladislav Bittman, because he knows a great deal about Victor Louis. Tell us about this intermediary here. He is the man who frequently ends up with some rather extraordinary revelations from the Soviet Union. In other words, when the Soviet Union wants to make something public, without making it public as the Soviet Union, they frequently choose Victor Louis. Who is he, why do they use him and how do they use him? LADISLAV BITTMAN (former Czechoslovakian intelligence agent): Well, Victor Louis is actually a very important, for the Soviets, contact with the outside world. He's a man who spent, in the late 1940s and the late 1950s, several years in prison, and probably there he was recruited. And then starting with the early 1960s, he became well known for a number of contacts he had with the West for the KGB, and also he was involved in a number of disinformation operations mainly to undermine the reputations and positions of major Soviet writers, dissidents or refugees or former politicians. For example, in 1967 when Stalin's daughter prepared her manuscript, her memoirs to be published in the West, the KGB decided to make it more difficult and to leak out another version of her memoirs with the help of Victor Louis. The same thing happened a few years later in connection with the Khrushchev memoirs.

KOPPEL: Let me, let me, let me just stop you for a moment, because you used a term that I know is all too familiar to you, and I, I confess I know what it means, but disinformation, give me a very quick capsule definition. What does disinformation mean? How is it used? BITTMAN: Well, ah, disinformation is a deliberately distorted information that is leaked to the opponent with the expectation that it will deceive either the public at large or the decision-making elite in a foreign country, in the target country.

KOPPEL: Bill Hyland, I know this is the first time you've seen this, this film that we just showed tonight. Does that look like disinformation to you?

HYLAND: Oh, I think so. It's clearly, ah, staged to make the point that Dr. Sakharov is well, ah, and alive and even, ah, equally important, that Mrs. Bonner is in very good health, is driving and shopping so forth. You remember that this whole affair arose most recently because Mrs. Bonner had, ah, a desire to go leave the Soviet Union for medical treatment. So I think this is staged by the KGB to quell these rumors. The timing is a little bit, ah, puzzling. Why they should do it at this particular moment I'm not sure.

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KOPPEL: Well, also, also, I must confess the method is, is kind of puzzling. I mean, why do it this way? Why turn out a film with a Soviet narration, then give it to Victor Louis and have him sell it to a German newspaper and they then sell it to us? BITTMAN: Well, ah, may I...

KOPPEL: Yes, please, and then we're gonna have to take a quick break. Go ahead. BITTMAN: Ah, I think this is part of the scheme. Ah, you see, what we, what we have seen is not a piece of news from the Soviet Union. It is actually, it is actually an element of an operation, of a disinformation operation of an active measure, with the objective to discredit Sakharov and, with him, actually the whole, ah, human rights movement in the Soviet Union. Ah, first of all, the Soviets want to say, 'Look, he's well. He's all right. So all these rumors about his health, ah, deteriorating health are wrong.' But that is only one message. Ah, the second major message in, in this film is, ah, to show Sakharov as a man of, ah, double standards. That is, on one side he's on a hunger strike to help his wife to get out. And, ah, then we can see him actually looking fine or healthy, well. That, that means that vis-a-vis the Soviet authorities, he's actually very friendly and very nice. So, ah, the Soviets want to undermine his, ah, his reputation and, ah, use it also to polarize his popularity in the West.

KOPPEL: All right. Let's take a break. Ah, we, we will come back to you, Mrs. Yankelevich, in, in just one moment. But we're going to continue our discussion when we come back.

KOPPEL: Continuing our discussion now with Tatiana Yankelevich, the stepdaughter of Andrei Sakharov. You wanted to make an observation a moment ago? YANKELEVICH: Well, yes, I'd just... It just occurred to me that I'd like to slightly change the perspective of this conversation if I, if I may. I would like to say a probably very controversial thing because it's, ah... I want to express both pessimistic and optimistic, ah, thoughts that I, ah, had in connection with the release of this film. I think in a sense this is a, ah, minor, minor but still a victory, ah, that this film has been released by the Soviet authorities. I think that it indicates that a pressure, a public concern from the West, even in the present circumstances of East-West relations can, ah, still bring some positive results such as the release of this film, for example. And at the same time, it is not altogether possible to exclude completely a, ah... It is not possible to exclude that the Soviet authorities have done that for their own reasons, which we might not, ah, see as good reasons. And that is to avert ( sic) attention from what, if that has already taken place, the trial of my mother. And, ah, there is some unconfirmed report, according to State Department today, that my mother has been already tried and sentenced to five years of exile on the 17th of August.

KOPPEL: Well, in, in point of fact, if I may interrupt you, if you listen to the narration in that movie, ah, you may recall that the narrator said up until this time Yelena Bonner was allowed to leave Gorky. Now she is not allowed to leave Gorky anymore. It wasn't put quite in those words, but that was the sense of it. Is, is... YANKELEVICH: Yes.

KOPPEL: Is that what you think the State Department is referring to, that she has been... Also it made reference to visits to the, the county prosecutor. What would that be about? YANKELEVICH: Yes. I, well, first of all, she was able to travel until the second of May, and that was quite some time ago,

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already three and a half months. And, ah, when she was detained this is was, this was the, ah, this prompted the beginning of the hunger strike. Because Sakharov has indicated that he would begin the hunger strike the very moment she is detained in Gorky and prevented from traveling. Ah, and, ah, as to the, ah, this reference by the prosecution, the prosecutor's office, ah, this, ah, certainly has to do with the investigation on her case. And I, ah, the very vague form into which the narration puts it, ah, which is that she's, ah, that she has to go to the prosecutor's office to give the explanation, does not give any clear idea of what is going on. In fact, what was going on was an investigation on my mother's case, ah, after she was charged with anti-Soviet slander and defaming the Soviets' social and political order.

KOPPEL: Let me pick up, if I may, will Bill Hyland, ah, a point that you, Ms. Yankelevich, made a moment ago. The notion that the Soviets here are responding to Western pressure but doing it in a form in which it is not the Soviet government, qua... the Soviet government responding, it's some anonymous narrator, and who in heaven's name knows who made the movie. You buy that? And if so, why do you think they're responding in this fashion now? HYLAND: I think, ah, Ted, that they are responding to Western pressure, ah, to all the attention that comes to the Sakharov case. Ah, it's a sore point with them. It's embarrassing to them. They can't hold a discussion.

KOPPEL: But this isn't going to end it. I mean, as we, as we have demonstrated here this evening, it raises more questions than it answers. HYLAND: Oh, absolutely. But from their standpoint, it does at least give them a peg on which to argue for another week, two weeks, month, who knows, that, ah, 'What you've heard about Dr. Sakharov is not true. Ah, there even in the West is a movie, et cetera, et cetera.' I think that this gives them, ah, at least some ammunition. However crude it seems to us, it does make their point, ah, that at some point he was alive, talking to people, et cetera. And I think this, we have to bear in mind that we're coming into a season of, ah, political campaigning. I don't mean presidential elections but Soviet political campaigning. The U.N. will be opening. Andrei Gromyko is likely to be at the U.N. session. Ah, the Russians will be in contact with American scientists and physicians on the nuclear freeze, et cetera. And a point that always comes up in those conversations is the status of Dr. Sakharov. American scientists in particular, ah, raise it, and it's, ah, embarrassing for the Russians, puts them on the defensive. And here's a little piece of evidence that the average Russian spokesman can point to and say, 'Well, I saw a movie on ABC television, and he was all right then. What are you talking about?'

KOPPEL: All right. Ladislav Bittman, some closing thoughts from you. This was your area of, of specialization. Anything more subtle to it than what we have raised here? These all seem like rather obvious points. BITTMAN: Ah, there is one more thing I would, ah, say. What we can expect in the future is an effort to divide these two individuals, Sakharov and his wife, ah, first to, to separate them physically and then to try to separate them psychologically and put somehow, ah, both under pressure to, ah, eventually to show that Sakharov was, had done many statements under the pressure of his wife, that maybe she manipulated him. Ah, that is I think the effort to, the direction into which they are heading.